"Bodily purity is primarily attained through fasting, and through bodily purity comes spiritual purity. Abstinence from food, according to the words of that son of grace, St. Ephraim the Syrian, means: 'Not to desire or demand much food, either sweet or costly; to eat nothing outside the stated times; not to give oneself over to gratification of the appetite; not to stir up hunger in oneself by looking at good food; and not to desire one or another sort of food.'"

St. Nikolai Velimirovich

+ + +

"To refrain from food for a day, or two days, three, four, five, or a week, a man cannot do always. But, so as every day to eat bread and drink, one can always do this; only, having eaten, one should be a little hungry, so that the body will be submissive to the spirit and capable of labors and sensitive to mental movements, and so the bodily passions will be conquered. Complete fasting cannot mortify the bodily passions as well as poor food mortifies them. As it is indispensible to breathe, so also is it to fast. Fasting once having entered into the soul, kills to the depths the sin which lies therein."

St. Paisy of Neamt

St. Dunstan's Academy for Christian Education

The Diocese of Quincy
(Anglican Church in North America)

Imprimatur: ✠Alberto Morales
IX Bishop of Quincy
27 September 2010

A Brief Look at Fasting for Christians...

"Gluttony makes a man gloomy and fearful, but fasting makes him joyful and courageous. And, as gluttony calls forth greater and greater gluttony, so fasting stimulates greater and greater endurance. When a man realizes the grace that comes through fasting, he desires to fast more and more. And the graces that come through fasting are countless...."

Saint Nikolai of Zicha

The Rule of the Ancient Church

Throughout the year, Wednesdays and Fridays are kept as days of strict fasting (that is, abstaining from meat, fish, dairy, eggs, oil, and wine). The days of the weeks following Christmas and Pascha (Easter) are fast-free.

In addition, there are four fasting periods throughout the Church year – Advent, Lent, a variable period of time in June leading up to the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, and the two weeks in August preceding the Assumption of Mary (the Dormition). Good Friday and Holy Saturday are often observed with strict fasting from all food.

Note that the Ancient Church's model of fasting (followed by the Orthodox Church to this day) is based on what the West would call "abstinence" – it is a reduction in the **types** of particular food items, rather than in their quantities.

Fasting is never meant to harm the body – only to aid the soul. Therefore, one should first take into account one's health and physical limitations and needs before fasting.

While the rule of fasting is the same for all, fasting is a personal matter, and the rule for an individual is arrived at with one's spiritual Father (usually a priest). Never forget that fasting without prayer is pointless, and may likely be spiritually harmful.

In all matters pertaining to fasting, it is important that one be under the spiritual direction of one's priest.

The Rule of the Western Church

Throughout the year, Fridays are kept as days of abstinence (the Book of Common Prayer calls these "days of special devotion"). As such, the meat of land-dwelling animals and poultry is not eaten.

Throughout Lent, this same pattern is followed, although some individuals will choose to abstain from fleshmeats on other days as well.

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are kept as days of strict fasting – no food at all throughout the daylight hours. The Roman Catholic discipline has reduced this to one normal sized meal, and two smaller meals, the sum of which does not equal the one larger meal.

The rules for fasting and abstinence are commonly understood to apply to all persons between the ages of 18 and 65. Given exemption from the discipline are those who are infirm, or who engage in heavy manual labor.

Never forget that fasting without prayer is pointless, and may likely be spiritually harmful.

In all matters pertaining to fasting, it is important that one be under the spiritual direction of one's priest.